

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of handling frames ~~in a network device~~, said method comprising:

receiving a frame at a first network device of an assembly of network devices divided into a first trunk group on a first side and a second trunk group on a second side, wherein the assembly includes a plurality of high-speed links connecting devices on the first side to corresponding devices on the second side, and wherein the first network device has a first high-speed port connected to a first high-speed link of the plurality of high-speed links and is on the first side and a member of the first trunk group;

determining using the first network device, whether the frame is destined for a network device of the first trunk group or a second network device of the second trunk group;

if the frame is destined for the second network device, determining a path for forwarding the frame to the second side via a first high-speed link of the plurality of high-speed links connecting the first side to the second side, the path being determined based on achieving a minimized forwarding latency for forwarding the frame to the second network device and including wherein the first high-speed port link is local to the second of the first network device;  
and

if the frame is not destined for one of the network devices of the second trunk group, forwarding the frame from the first network device to a network device of the first side to which the frame is destined.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) A first network device for handling frames, comprising:

receiving means for receiving a frame at [[a]] the first network device of an assembly of network devices of a trunk group divided into a first side and a second side, wherein the assembly includes a plurality of high-speed links connecting the first side to the second side, and wherein the first network device is on the first side and includes a first high-speed port connected to a first high-speed link of the plurality of high-speed links;

determining means for determining whether the frame is destined for a network device of the first side or a second network device of the second side; and

forwarding means for forwarding, if the frame is destined for [[a]] the second network device of the second side, the frame to the second side using a forwarding path determined based on achieving a minimized forwarding latency for forwarding the frame to the second network device and including via a first high-speed link of the plurality of high-speed links connecting the first side to the second side, wherein the first high-speed port link is local to either the first network device or the second network device, and

if the frame is not destined for one of the network devices of the second side, forwarding the frame from the first network device to a network device of the first side to which the frame is destined.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The first network device as recited in claim 6, wherein the forwarding means comprises means for forwarding, if the frame is destined for [[a]] the second network device of the second side, the frame via the first high-speed link to a third network device of the second side that includes the first high-speed link, and forwarding the frame to the second device of the second side via one or more expansion links connecting the third device to the second device.

9. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The first network device as recited in claim 6, wherein the forwarding means comprises means for forwarding, if the frame is destined for [[a]] the second network device of the second side, the frame via the first high-speed link to the second network device wherein the first high-speed link is local to both the first network device and the second network device.

10. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The first network device as recited in claim 6, wherein the forwarding means comprises means for forwarding, if the frame is not destined for one of the network devices of the second side, the frame from the first network device to [[a]] the network device of the first side to which the frame is destined via one or more expansion links.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the receiving comprises:  
receiving the frame at the first network device, and wherein the plurality of links include a plurality of high speed links connecting a Gigabit port on a device of the first side to a Gigabit port on a device of the second side.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the determining comprises:  
determining, based on a source chip identifier in a header of the frame, whether the frame is destined for a network device of the first trunk group or the second trunk group.

18. (Cancelled).

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein if the frame is destined for the second network device, the forwarding comprises:

determining that the first high-speed link is local to the first network device; and

forwarding the frame from the first network device to the second network device via the first high-speed link.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein if the frame is not destined for a network device of the second side, the forwarding comprises:

forwarding the frame to the network device of the first side to which the frame is destined via one or more expansion links connecting the first device to the network device of the first side to which the frame is destined.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Cancelled).

23. (Cancelled).

24. (Currently Amended) A network device configured to:

receive a frame, the network device being a member of a first trunk group on a first side of an assembly of network devices and including a first high-speed port of a plurality of high-speed ports;

determine that the frame is destined for a second network device that is a member of a second trunk group on a second side of the assembly, wherein the assembly of network devices include expansion ports connecting network devices located on a same side to each other, and wherein the plurality of high-speed ports connect network devices on different sides, and wherein the high-speed ports have a higher transfer rate than the expansion ports;

determine a path to minimize ~~reduce~~ latency in forwarding the frame from the network device to the second network device via a high-speed port of the network device connecting ~~[[a]] the first side to [[a]] the second side, [[and]] expansion ports connecting network devices located on the same side to each other, wherein the high-speed ports have a higher transfer rate than the expansion ports;~~ and

forward the frame using the path, to the second network device on the second side of the assembly, based on the path, to a network device of the first side via the expansion ports, for transmission to the second network device via a first high-speed port of the high-speed ports connecting the network device of the first side receiving the frame to the second network device.

25. (Previously Presented) The network device of claim 24 wherein the high-speed ports are Gigabit ports.

26. (Currently Amended) The network device of claim 24 wherein the network device configured to determine the path is configured to determine how to forward the packet to the second network device based on a physical location of the network device relative to the second ~~[[the]]~~ network device.

27. (Previously Presented) The network device of claim 24 wherein the network device is configured to determine that the frame is destined for the second network device based on a source chip identifier of the frame.

28. (Currently Amended) The network device of claim 24 wherein the network device does not rely on a hash result to determine the path~~that the frame is destined for the second network device.~~

29. (Cancelled).

30. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein if the frame is destined for the second network device, the forwarding comprises:

determining the path relative to an alternate path, the alternate path based on a hash algorithm used to select a high-speed link of the plurality of links.